

## **Two Local Watershed Plans Open for Public Review Through August 14**

Residents, landowners, local governments, and partner organizations are invited to review and comment on the draft Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans for both the Big Fork River Watershed and the Little Fork River Watershed during their formal public review periods, now through August 14, 2026.

Developed through Minnesota's One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) program, both plans represent locally driven efforts to guide voluntary conservation projects and programs over the next ten years. Once completed, the plans will serve as roadmaps for improving and protecting water resources while helping local partners prioritize future conservation funding.

Both planning efforts emphasize watershed-scale collaboration and local priorities. Throughout the planning process, community experts, local professionals, agency staff, elected officials, and interested residents identified water resource concerns, discussed opportunities for improvement, and developed measurable goals to track progress over time. Importantly, these plans do not create new regulations, ordinances, or enforcement requirements. Instead, they focus on voluntary conservation practices that help landowners and communities improve water quality and protect natural resources.

Approval of each plan will make the respective watersheds eligible for reliable, non-competitive implementation funding through Minnesota's Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment and the Board of Water and Soil Resources. Many eligible conservation projects may receive cost-share assistance covering up to 75 percent of project costs.

Examples of projects identified in the plans include:

- Repairing or restoring eroding shorelines
- Planting cover crops on agricultural lands
- Installing cattle exclusion fencing near lakes and streams
- Managing private forest lands for water quality benefits
- Sealing unused wells and replacing noncompliant septic systems (Little Fork River Watershed)
- Other voluntary projects that provide measurable water quality improvements

### **Big Fork River Watershed**

Development of the Big Fork River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan began in July 2025 and has involved collaboration among community experts, local professionals,

agency staff, and residents. The planning effort has been led by Itasca County, Itasca Soil and Water Conservation District, Koochiching County, Koochiching SWCD, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and the City of Big Falls. Monthly resource topic meetings and plan organization meetings helped shape the draft now available for public review.

The draft Big Fork River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan can be reviewed at [www.itascaswcd.org](http://www.itascaswcd.org) or in person at the Itasca SWCD office, 1895 W. US Hwy 2, Grand Rapids, MN 56672.

Big Fork River Watershed Contact:

Matt Gutzmann  
Itasca Soil and Water Conservation District  
[matt.gutzmann@itascaswcd.org](mailto:matt.gutzmann@itascaswcd.org)  
218-999-4435

### **Little Fork River Watershed**

Planning for the Little Fork River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan began in 2024 and has included extensive collaboration among local governments, conservation organizations, agency staff, and residents. The planning partnership includes Koochiching SWCD, Koochiching County, North St. Louis SWCD, St. Louis County, Itasca SWCD, Itasca County, the City of Littlefork, and the City of Cook. Participants met through regular resource topic meetings and planning sessions to develop the draft plan now available for public comment.

The draft Little Fork River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan can be reviewed online at [https://koochichingswcd.org/lfr\\_1w1p/](https://koochichingswcd.org/lfr_1w1p/).

Little Fork River Watershed Contact:

Pam Tomevi  
Koochiching County  
[pam.tomevi@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:pam.tomevi@co.koochiching.mn.us)  
218-283-1174

Public participation is an important part of both planning efforts. Comments received during the formal review period will be considered as the plans are finalized, helping ensure they reflect local conservation priorities and provide effective guidance for future water resource protection and restoration efforts across both watersheds.

